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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 26, 2002

***Carson Introduces Methamphetamine Legislation  
Rural Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act will provide  
assistance for equipment, training, and officer retention***

Washington, D.C. --

Second District Congressman Brad Carson (D-OK) introduced today comprehensive legislation designed to improve rural safety and law enforcement. The "Rural Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act" focuses on providing grants to law enforcement agencies to hire, train, and retain officers, and to acquire technology and equipment. In addition, the legislation would create a grant program to assist rural communities in developing 9-1-1 services. Congressman Carson's legislation also would establish a Rural Policing Institute to develop and provide training programs to rural law enforcement agencies on policing techniques and educate officers on issues relating to rural community protection. Assistance would also be guaranteed to Native American Tribes. Congressman Carson wrote into the legislation a measure to set-aside 10% of grant funding for Tribal law enforcement.

"The 'Rural Safety and Law Enforcement Improvement Act' responds to the needs facing law enforcement agencies and communities in rural America," Congressman Carson said. "As I have traveled Eastern Oklahoma and met with Sheriffs and police chiefs, I have constantly heard the same concerns: a lack of funding, a need for new equipment, and difficulties in recruiting and retaining officers. My legislation expands on the COPS program, which has been critical for rural law enforcement, by providing assistance to retain officers.

"In the legislation, there is an emphasis on expanding training opportunities for rural law enforcement. Increased training and education will only serve to keep officers safe. I have talked to too many deputies who have told me they often respond to emergency calls without a partner or backup. This situation demands they have the best equipment and training."

The highlight of the legislation is the assistance provided to rural law enforcement agencies and communities to combat the methamphetamine epidemic raging in rural America. Congressman Carson's legislation approaches the methamphetamine problem

in a comprehensive manner. The legislation authorizes for an expansion of the Methamphetamine Hot Spots Program to include personnel and equipment for enforcement, prosecution and environmental cleanup, and for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Program to provide additional training and equipment. The legislation also increases funding authorization treatment programs for meth addicts. Finally, Congressman Carson's legislation would create a grant program for community driven prevention education programs.

"Oklahoma is faced with an methamphetamine epidemic," Congressman Carson said, "and the situation is only getting worse. In the first six months of this year, Mayes County has already busted more labs than in all of 2001. Last year, one Sheriff in my Congressional District had to be taken to the hospital for injuries incurred from a meth bust. Every Sheriff I have spoken with since taking office has told me the overwhelming majority of everyone in his or her jail are there for a drug related crime. This legislation is a step in the right direction.

"There is an inherit danger when law enforcement officers respond to any emergency call, however, responding to a meth lab increases the dangers exponentially. Often times the labs are booby-trapped with bombs, grenades, or other traps. The labs are filled with toxic gas, and are highly unstable and explosive. In Oklahoma, and across rural America, law enforcement often lacks the necessary, and federally required, protective equipment to bust a meth lab. This legislation address that need by providing additional grant funding opportunities.

"Methamphetamine is unlike other drugs, because it has a direct impact on each community in our state. For everyone pound of methamphetamine that is cooked, five pounds of toxic waste is produced. This toxic waste is finding its way into our ground water, our lakes and streams, and in our soil. It is vitally important additional resources are available to protect our environment from this danger.

"Eastern Oklahoma is a beautiful part of our nation, and holds tremendous potential, however, methamphetamine is threatening us from moving forward. We must be aggressive in combating this plague."

Congressman Carson is a member of the Congressional Methamphetamine Caucus, a bipartisan group of legislators who are committed to combating methamphetamine and providing assistance to communities. As a member of the Meth Caucus, Congressman Carson has co-sponsored legislation to expand equipment and training programs for law enforcement, increase federal penalties for meth production and distribution, and making it more difficult to purchase large quantities of pseudoephedrine, a necessary component in methamphetamine production. Congressman Carson has been active on the local level as well. In August 2001, the Congressman sponsored the Cherokee County Sheriff's Department to attend a meth-training workshop in Sioux City. He has begun to work with small business owners, law enforcement, and community leaders to develop a "Meth Watch Program," an educational program to inform the community of indicators of meth labs and production. The Congressman's office has also participated in planning the

Methamphetamine Conference in Oklahoma City scheduled for Friday, July 26th. The Drug Enforcement Administration's Director, Asa Hutchinson, will be in attendance.

“A career in law enforcement is one of the most noble callings,” Congressman Carson said. “The men and women who swear to protect our communities deserve our full support. They work grueling hours, for little pay, just to ensure our safety. At the very least, we should provide them with the necessary equipment and training to effectively, and safely, perform their duties

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